
NEWS RELEASE

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40th Anniversary of Virginia Fair Housing Law

Governor McDonnell proclaims April 2012 as Fair Housing Month

RICHMOND— A rental listing that says, “No Kids” . . . A real estate firm refuses to allow a tenant with multiple sclerosis to transfer to a first-floor apartment with a no-step entry . . . A landlord turns off a tenant’s electricity and evicts her after learning her boyfriend’s race (Black).

These are not examples of discrimination from a distant past. They are real-life cases brought by the Virginia Fair Housing Office in the past year.

Four decades after the passage of the Virginia Fair Housing Law, we are reminded that discrimination has no home in Virginia or anywhere in America. Recognizing that “equal housing opportunities are essential for supporting vibrant communities and economic vitality,” Gov. Bob McDonnell proclaims April as Fair Housing Month in Virginia.

Federal and state fair housing laws prohibit housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and familial status (families with children under age 18). In addition, Virginia’s Fair Housing Law—which celebrates its 40th anniversary in April 2012—further protects “elderliness,” individuals age 55 or older, from housing discrimination.

Fair Housing Law protects people from bias when trying to rent an apartment, buy a house, obtain a mortgage, or purchase homeowner’s insurance. Fair housing requirements apply to all housing providers – property managers, owners, landlords, real estate agents, banks, savings institutions, credit unions, insurance companies, mortgage lenders, and appraisers.

The Fair Housing Board administers and enforces the Fair Housing Law, although the Real Estate Board is responsible for fair housing cases involving real estate licensees or their employees. Each Board investigates housing discrimination through the Fair Housing Office, which receives an average of 180 complaints each year. The greatest number of complaints involves racial discrimination, but disability and familial status complaints continue to rise.

Individuals who believe they may be victims of housing discrimination should contact the Virginia Fair Housing Office toll-free at 1-888-551-FAIR (3247). The agency also offers free informational seminars to housing consumers and providers who wish to learn more about their rights and responsibilities under the Fair Housing Act.

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CERTIFICATE of RECOGNITION

By virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution in the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is hereby officially recognized:

FAIR HOUSING MONTH

WHEREAS, equal housing opportunities are essential for supporting vibrant communities and economic vitality throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, illegal barriers to equal opportunity in housing, no matter how subtle, diminish the rights of all; and

WHEREAS, the policy of Virginia is to prohibit discriminatory housing practices in order that the peace, health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of all the inhabitants of the Commonwealth may be protected and insured; and

WHEREAS, April 2012 marks the 40th Anniversary of the passage of the Virginia Fair Housing Law; and

WHEREAS, the federal Fair Housing Act, an historic component of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, affirms the right of all citizens to equal housing opportunities free from discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status; and

WHEREAS, our Commonwealth's own fair housing law affords even greater opportunities and ensures equitable treatment of older Virginians by also prohibiting discrimination based on elderliness; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Fair Housing Office at the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation operates to enforce fair housing law and educate the public that there can be no place for discrimination, whether in rental housing, home buying, lending, or insurance; and

WHEREAS, in partnership with non-profit and private-sector organizations involving in housing transactions, Virginia is committed to educating the public about fair housing rights and responsibilities; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert F. McDonnell, do hereby recognize April 2012 as **FAIR HOUSING MONTH** in our **COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**, and I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens.




Governor


Secretary of the Commonwealth